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AUTHOR Null, Eldon J.; Spence, Betty A.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research reported in this paper was to investigate certain personal variables of elementary school teachers, including sex, which might be related to the perception of male and female principals. It was assumed that the research would provide further information conerning the evaluation by teachers of the leader behavior of their respective principals. Two instruments were used in the data-gathering phase of the research: (a) a short personalized personnel data inventory, utilized to gather information about the sex, age, marital status, and number of years experience of each respondent, and (b) the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire-Form XII, employed to measure the perception by each teacher of the dimensions of leader behavior of his or her principal. The sample utilized in the research consisted of full-time teaching personnel from 16 elementary schools located in a large, metropolitan school system. These schools were selected because each contained teachers of both sexes, of different ages, of various years of experience, and of different marital situatins. Two-way analyses of variance were utilized in the examination of the data produced by the questionnaires, and no post-hoc procedures were used since all independent variables were dichotomized. (Results and discussicn are included in the text.) (JA)

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SELECTED VARIABLES OF TEACHERS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF MALE AND OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS

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Eldon J. Null
Purdue University
Lafayette, Indiana

Patty A. Spence
Frontier [illegible] School
Chalmers, Indiana

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SELECTED VARIABLES OF TEACHERS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF MALE AND OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS

Eldon J. Null and Betty A. Spence

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A school system can be viewed and described as a formal organization which possesses to a greater or lesser degree each of the characteristics common to all bureaucratic institutions. One of these characteristics is the attachment of certain specified duties to each office and the arrangement of all offices into some type of hierarchical structure. The principalship is an office which is included in the bureaucratic structure of virtually every school system of any adequate size in the nation. In past years the role of the principal was defined in rather restrictive terms, and he tended to work under the close supervision of his superordinates in the central office. Under this arrangement each local school had little autonomy, and each principal was quite limited in the areas in which he could make decisions pertinent to the operation of his own institution. However, within relatively recent years a trend has developed toward a decentralization of educational systems, and this movement is gradually changing the role of the principal in the school bureaucracy. As the individual school is given more freedom to solve its own problems and to develop a unique program for its own children, the principal almost certainly will become a more important leader with a wider range of duties to perform.

Theoretical Basis

This expanding role of the principal is making the performance of his duties ever more difficult. The problem is complicated further by a

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noticeable trend at the present time in the direction of a more critical evaluation of his work by superordinates and by subordinates in the school system. Central office personnel, in response to concerns by taxpayers for accountability, are taking an increasingly harder look at the work of the building principal, and teachers, who are gaining strength through membership in professional associations and unions, are demanding more and more the right to evaluate him and to have these evaluations taken into consideration when decisions are made by school authorities.

It is very possible, however, that teachers in a school will not agree on their evaluations of the behavior of the principal. A number of theorists and researchers have hypothesized that certain personal variables of an individual are related to the manner in which he perceives the behavior of another person. Combs and Snygg (3) state, for example, that men and women perceive some things in a different way, and that children do not perceive in the same manner as adults. They go on to say that the meaning attributed to whatever is perceived comes from the "phenomenal self" of the individual. McDavid and Harari (4) point out that research has provided evidence which indicates that social factors such as cultural values and socially learned expectations influence the way in which a person perceives. Since evaluations by teachers are based on their perception of the behavior of the principal, it appears that each teacher will see him in a somewhat different light.

It also is quite possible that certain personal characteristics of the principal will be related to the way in which his behavior on the job is perceived and evaluated by the teachers in the school. There have been

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relatively few studies designed specifically to investigate this question, but some research has been carried out in areas peripheral to it. Morsink (5), who conducted one of these studies, found rather limited evidence that the sex of a principal is related to the manner in which his or her leader behavior is evaluated by the teachers. Barter (1), in another research effort, found that the majority of all teachers in the sample evaluated male principals and female principals equally, but that certain sub-categories of teachers tended to perceive a difference in the performance of the two sexes.

Theorists recognize that the way in which subordinates perceive the behavior of the leader is of extreme importance. Brown (2), for example, points out that the actual behavior of the leader is of less consequence than his perceived behavior, and that it is the latter which determines the behavior of the persons who are lower on the hierarchy. The purpose of the research reported in this paper was to investigate certain personal variables of elementary school teachers, including sex, which might be related to the perception of male and of female principals. It was assumed that the research would provide further information concerning the evaluation by teachers of the leader behavior of their respective principals.

Instruments

Two instruments were used in the data gathering phase of the research, and both were answered by all of the teachers in the sample. A short personal data inventory was utilized to gather information about the sex, age, marital status, and number of years of experience of each respondent,

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and the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire-Form XII (LBDQ-XII) was employed to measure the perception by each teacher of the dimensions of leader behavior of his or her principal.

The LBDQ XII is a questionnaire which is used often in research concerned with leader behavior as a variable. As its name indicates, it provides a measure of twelve dimensions of leader behavior which are defined by twelve different subscales or subtests of the instrument. Each of these subscales consists of either five items or ten items, and the entire instrument contains a total of 100 items. Each teacher responds to each item by circling the letter which best describes the degree to which his or her principal is perceived to engage in the behavior described by that particular item. The alternatives are (A) always, (B) often, (C) occasionally, (D) seldom, and (E) never, and each response is given a score on a continuum from five to one. A high score indicates that the respondent perceives the behavior characteristic to be present, while a low score indicates that it is perceived to be absent.

Collection of Data

The sample utilized in the research consisted of full time teaching personnel from sixteen elementary schools located in a large, metropolitan school system. These schools were selected for the study because each contained teachers of both sexes, of different ages, of various numbers of years of experience, and of different marital situations, and also because seven of them were supervised by male principals and nine of them were under the leadership of female principals. In addition, each of the

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sixteen principals was serving at least his or her second consecutive year in that particular leadership position.

Each of the principals was contacted individually by letter and in person, and the purpose of the research was explained in detail. All sixteen of them expressed a willingness to participate when complete anonymity was assured, and a schedule was arranged for the administration of the instruments to the respective teaching staffs. Before the questionnaires could be distributed, one school was dropped from the sample because the principal became ill and certain extenuating circumstances made it atypical of the others in the school system. This elementary school was replaced in the study by another with a principal of the same sex and with a very similar distribution of the teacher variables under investigation.

Each principal explained the study at a meeting of the teachers in the building, and the staff members were asked for their cooperation but were told that their participation was on a voluntary basis. The supervisor then distributed the personal data inventory, the LBDQ-XII, and a letter which further explained the research to each teacher in his or her school who indicated a willingness to serve as part of the sample. One of the teachers in each of the sixteen buildings was asked by the principal to collect the completed instruments so there would be no suspicion that he or she would see any of the responses. The researchers returned to each school on a specified date and picked up the completed questionnaires from the staff member in charge of their collection.

A total of 458 sets of questionnaires was distributed to teachers who agreed to participate in the study, and 341 of them were returned and were

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answered correctly so they could be included in the sample. An investigation was made of those teachers who (a) refused to take part in the research or (b) did not return their completed instruments after originally agreeing to be respondents. It was concluded that the reason ordinarily was illness, lack of time, or unforeseen personal problems, and there was no evidence of systematic non-return related to any of the variables under investigation in the research.

Analysis of the Data

Two-way analyses of variance were utilized in the examination of the data produced by the questionnaires, and no post hoc procedures were used since all independent variables were dichotomized. All statistical tests were run at the .05 level of significance, and null hypotheses were rejected when observed F-ratios exceeded tabled F-ratios at this alpha and with the proper numerator and denominator degrees of freedom. Since (a) main effects of sex, age, years of experience, and marital status of teachers were examined, (b) interactions of sex with each of the other three independent variables were tested, (c) twelve dependent variables were used, and (d) separate ANOVAS were computed for teachers in schools with male principals and for teachers in schools with female principals, a total of 72 analyses of variance were run (3 X 12 X 2). These two-way ANOVAS were used to examine a total of 168 null hypotheses.

The mean scores of male principals as perceived by male teachers and by female teachers are shown in Table 1, and the mean scores of female principals as seen by teachers of each sex are given in Table 2. Since all subtests of the LBDQ-XII do not contain the same number of items,

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scores on the different dimensions are not necessarily comparable.

Figures in Table 1 indicate that female teachers perceived the male principal significantly higher than did male teachers on Reconciliation, Tolerance of Uncertainty, Role Assumption, Initiation of Structure, Consideration, and Integration. Data in the table also reveal that female teachers scored the male principal higher on four of the remaining six dimensions, but the differences were not statistically significant.

In contrast to these findings, the figures in Table 2 show no apparent pattern of mean scores, and no statistically significant difference between any two means was isolated. The table provides evidence that the male teachers and the female teachers tended to perceive the leader behavior of the female principal in a like manner.

Table 3 shows the mean scores given to male principals by teachers younger than 40 years of age and by teachers 40 and more years of age. Since no meaningful pattern of scores can be seen and statistical tests revealed no significant differences, it appears that younger teachers and older teachers evaluated the behavior of the male principals in a similar way.

Data in Table 4, however, point out that the female principals were perceived in a somewhat different manner by the younger teachers than by the older staff members. The older teachers rated these supervisors higher on ten of the twelve dimensions of leadership, and the differences were statistically significant for the subtests of Predictive Accuracy, Integration, Superior Orientation, Reconciliation, Persuasiveness, Initiation of Structure, and Consideration.

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Three interactions of sex and age were found in examinations of the male principals, but none was isolated in investigations of the female principals. Female teachers at both age levels scored the male principal higher on Tolerance of Uncertainty than did male teachers, but this difference was considerably greater among teachers in the older age category; younger male teachers and older females scored the male principal higher on Tolerance of Freedom than did younger female teachers and older males; and younger female teachers and older male teachers scored the male principal higher on Consideration than did younger male teachers and older female teachers. Since both age and sex were not main effects in any of these tests which isolated interactions, the interactions themselves should be interpreted with caution.

Statistical tests and patterns of means revealed only a few findings of consequence concerning the independent variables of years of experience and marital status. Teachers with ten or more years of experience scored the female principals significantly higher than did teachers with fewer than ten years of experience on the dimensions of Persuasiveness and Integration, and they scored them somewhat higher on nine of the remaining ten subtests. In contrast, married teachers perceived the male principals significantly higher than did unmarried teachers on the dimension of Role Assumption, and they evaluated them somewhat higher on the other eleven subtests. However, marital status appeared to be unrelated to the perception of the behavior of female principals. This is somewhat surprising since it could be hypothesized that age, years of experience, and marital status are not independent of each other.

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Implications

The twelve dimensions of the LBDQ-XII represent a complex pattern of behaviors which are oriented toward the attainment of organizational goals and human relations goals. The research revealed that certain dimensions of the leader behavior of male principals and of female principals are perceived somewhat differently by various subcategories of their teaching staffs. Since it can be assumed that perceptions by teachers of the behavior of the principal influence their willingness to cooperate and thus have a bearing on the quality of the leadership of this supervisor, certain suggestions based on the results of this study can be made.

The findings of this study, particularly if they are supported by future research, can be utilized by school board members and other school officials to match teachers and principals in such a way that the management of individual schools is improved. It appears from findings of this study that female teachers prefer a male principal, and that these teachers possibly would be more satisfied and tend to be more cooperative if they were placed in a building with a male administrator. It appears also that, since older teachers perceived the female principal in a more positive way than did younger teachers, an improvement in the operation of elementary schools would result if they were matched.

Also, the results of the research indicated that there are differences between male principals and female principals as perceived by certain individuals on their staffs, but these differences do not indicate a superiority of one sex over the other on all dimensions of behavior. Therefore, consideration probably should be given to persons of both sexes

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in the selection of an elementary school principal.

And finally, the principal should be sensitive to the perceptions by teachers of his or her behavior as a leader. An awareness of variations in perceptions associated with certain personal characteristics of the teachers should guide him or her in interactions with different individuals on the teaching staff.

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Table 1. - Perceptions of Male Principals by Male and by Female Teachers

Dimensions	Mean Scores	
	Male Teachers (N=50)	Female Teachers (N=99)
Representation	19.26	19.72
** Reconciliation	18.83	20.43
** Tolerance of Uncertainty	36.35	38.61
Persuasiveness	36.95	37.90
* Initiation of Structure	37.89	39.81
Tolerance of Freedom	38.69	40.04
** Role Assumption	36.44	39.75
* Consideration	37.52	39.73
Production Emphasis	32.38	32.37
Predictive Accuracy	18.36	18.74
* Integration	17.60	18.96
Superior Orientation	37.10	36.88

** Significant at the .01 level
* Significant at the .05 level

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Table 2. - Perceptions of Female Principals by Male and by Female Teachers

Dimensions	Mean Scores: Male Teachers (N=54)	Female Teachers (N=138)
Representation	20.20	20.61
Reconciliation	18.35	17.91
Tolerance of Uncertainty	33.54	32.68
Persuasiveness	37.31	37.47
Initiation of Structure	40.07	40.27
Tolerance of Freedom	37.89	36.04
Role Assumption	38.61	39.00
Consideration	36.88	36.03
Production Emphasis	34.72	35.85
Predictive Accuracy	18.53	17.95
Integration	18.09	17.95
Superior Orientation	37.17	37.27

** Significant at the .01 level
* Significant at the .05 level

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Table 3. - Perceptions of Male Principals by Younger and by Older Teachers

Dimensions	Mean Scores: Younger Teachers (N=68)	Older Teachers (N=61)
Representation	19.86	19.13
Reconciliation	19.85	19.42
Tolerance of Uncertainty	37.05	37.92
Persuasiveness	37.19	37.66
Initiation of Structure	39.01	38.69
Tolerance of Freedom	39.61	39.11
Role Assumption	38.43	37.76
Consideration	38.16	39.08
Production Emphasis	32.53	32.22
Predictive Accuracy	18.52	18.68
Integration	18.18	18.35
Superior Orientation	36.83	37.15

** Significant at the .01 level
* Significant at the .05 level

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Table 4. - Perceptions of Female Principals by Younger and by Older Teachers

Dimensions	Mean Scores: Younger Teachers (N=117)	Mean Scores: Older Teachers (N=75)
Representation	20.17	20.65
* Reconciliation	17.49	18.82
Tolerance of Uncertainty	32.15	34.07
* Persuasiveness	36.25	38.53
* Initiation of Structure	39.05	41.29
Tolerance of Freedom	36.54	37.49
Role Assumption	38.41	37.49
* Consideration	35.33	37.58
Production Emphasis	35.42	35.15
** Predictive Accuracy	17.48	19.04
** Integration	17.14	19.01
** Superior Orientation	36.10	38.33

** Significant at the .01 level
* Significant at the .05 level